WORDCATCHER
NO. 78

WORDEATER 78 STAFF

STEEV CUSTER, JEFF HICKS, JENNIFER JAY, MARK SCHILLINGER, JOHN STOBART, GLENN TERRY

In order to get a selection published in this issue, three of the above had to vote for acceptance.
For the award winners, only John Stobart is responsible.

Manuscripts or cover designs for

WORDEATER 79

must be submitted to John Stobart
in room C-1069 by:

May 4, 1992

Manuscripts should be typed
and will not be returned.

AWARDS

Poetry

$5 to Steev Custer
$5 to Mark Darwyn
$5 to Jennifer Jay
$5 to Shelly Partilla
$5 to Donica Rampa

Fiction

$7.50 to Jason Smith
$10 to Glenn Terry
$7.50 to Tom Tollos

Cover Design
$20 to Jennifer Jay

Next Deadlines:

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Steev Custer

YOURS

What does it matter,
What I write,
or who I write it for?
Can the reader not imply
to each poem, a meaning
that weaves a motion or
movement for themselves?

My readers do not know
my life, so each poem
must hold something
Sacred for each and
every individual who
reads these words.

What could have been
written for a red-haired
short girl could be a
poem about a clock
for someone else.

So read, and enjoy
and worry not
about what was
in my mind, but
what was in
yours.

Donica Rampa

BESTSELLER

Scanning the titles
in the hard-bound section
(No easy-to-read paperbacks for me)
I snatched you off the shelf
and glanced at the cover
Such a pretty jacket
But it didn't tell me much
And I,
Being wiser than some,
flipped to the index
to see if the topics of
friendship
humor
and compassion
Could be found in the
Pages of Personality
And to my good fortune,
each had its own chapter.
A modern day classic.

Maria Mellinger

WORDS FALL TO THE FLOOR FROM

Words fall to the floor from
A pen dripping blue blood,
Hermits hiding in the hardwood
Leave their little homes to
Bundle the squashed sentences,
Editorial hunting.
Riddles, doublespeak, and adjectives escape.
Gone are all and any meanings.

Donica Rampa

POCKET FULL OF POSIES

He loves me
He loves me not
He loves me
He loves me not
He loves me
He asks me out
He loves me
He laughs with me
He loves me
He sleeps with me
His baby
He loves me not.

Sherry Scanlon

DREAMS

Dreams are like mirrors-they can shatter and break
Mirrors are replaceable and dreams you can create.

Look in a mirror and you see your face;
Look in a dream and you see a faraway place.

Mirrors give off reflections,
Dreams are perfection.

Mirrors are made out of glass,
Dreams are made to last.

Steev Custer

HE WAS THE KING OF POETRY

He was the King of Poetry,
but his lines were not

beautiful. Instead, they were
more like a swarm bottle of Rum:
Taken alone, it tasted bitter
and lonely. Mixed with icy-cold
Coke, and sipped while sitting
down, it slid smoothly, waited,
and hit hard when the reader
stood.

Maria Mellinger

WRITING LETTERS ADDRESSED TO HOMES

Writing letters addressed to homes
I used to live in, I inquire
About the emotions the movers forgot.
My fury was beneath the floor boards
of the family home, my anger
In the apartment of high school days,
Depression in a dormitory in Dekalb.
The new owners were happy to unload
My old possesions, and my new home
Welcomed the familiar ill will.

Maria Mellinger

POET WITH NEW YORK POST AND PEN

I left writing alone at her pleasant desk, secure and comfortable with her past, no hope for the fresh or individualistic. I left her to pursue art, guitar, and old Iggy Pop tapes.

When I saw that my friends were not home and there was no con versation- -of constellations, creative enddeavors, or crushes- -I sat on cold concrete outside my own garage, beerless if not fearless, unable to cry because the fluid would rhyme.

Art visited me wearing a Crayola Box. She would only dance in a Winnie-the-Pooh coloring book. Nothing wrong with Pooh, of course, but I had hoped to choreograph my own gallery.

My guitar sang three cords for thirty seconds before biting the fingers I fret with. I leaned the polished wood hard body of it against the door and crushed the pick into the gravel below. The saints shall march no more. Chords of tense muscles played their tune upon my back and a shiver worked it like a wa-wa peddle.

Dance, despite Iggy's efforts, denied an appearance because the neghbors peeked out their shades every few seconds. She's all too shy.

As the hours of unproductivity passed beneath the Big Dipper, writing sat smugly at her mahogany desk, like something out of a Kate Chopin novel, knowing I'd return. I have no other friends.

Brent Senholtz

MANY A DAY

Many a day
Did we sit
Discussing our spontaneous thoughts
Trying to make sense of it all
Always hoping to analyze
Whatever didn't appear tangible
Never letting our imagination
Take over silly logic
Were we trying to act
Like adults
Or were we just scared
To see our real selves?

Jennifer Jay

SHHH...

Loud noises and voices are obscene.
Silence is the most beautiful sound there is.
T.V.'s, radios, and most people disrupt the serene
music of the outdoors.
Do you hear
the humming rain
or how the trees giggle
when the wind fondles their boughs?
Listen close!
Do you hear
the sun laughing
the geese mourning
the corn whispering
the mutt sniffing
the willows weeping
a snake whistling
a snoring mole
the Queen bee lecturing
or the chipmunks chatter?

Some think ignorance is bliss.
Please don't be ignorant.
Rather, believe that
Silence is bliss.

Dawn Mooney

CELEBRATION

I left my life
To worship
At the altar of music
To be baptized
In a shower of light
To taste communion
Of colors and sounds
To feel the motion
Of dancing bodies.
To live in a time
Other than now
To be someone
Other than myself
T o remember always
Who I was That day
To bring that person
Home.

Dawn Mooney

CRYSTALLINE ROMANCE

Hugs and kisses
Of porcelain;
Tiny figurines
The child played with
Then discarded
Ignoring my frail attempts
T o play mother
And lover
All to keep the man from breaking
The delicate craft
That had been our love.

Maria Mellinger

FOURTEEN

The fourteen year old girl that lives next door to me knows everything.

After only fourteen years, she's learned that anybody older than fourteen, unless he's your boyfriend, is an idiot. She knoes she's cool, with her tight jeans, cartoonish heavy metal t-shirts, puffy high top shoes, and hair teased higher than a hair spray can's length. She knows smoking is the shit, drinking is cool, and drugs are a little something to save for when the virgin thrills of simple vice die. She knows <u>everything</u> about sex.

She knows she's fooling her parents. They're asleep every morning at 4 a.m. when I see boys crawling in her bedroom window. Each night I pull into my driveway boys scatter in front of my car like moths at my headlights, running, hiding, running back when they hear my door shut. She knows I am kept awake by their "conversations"- Romeo on a garbage can borrowed from my front yard, Juliet trying to pop the window screen to let him in again.

She knows everything, of course. She's fourteen.

In 1984, at the age of fourteen, I tried to kill myself for the first time. I had so few friends and so little love. I thought the world could very well end tomorrow and I would die without ever being kissed. My bedroom was on the second floor of my parent's home and I never imagined a night visit from anyone except my mother, who had a fetish for closing windows with every rain. I didn't know much of anything, except pain.

I can't imagine her fourteen. I can't imagine being so sure of my importance four short years after fifth grade. If the world is so clear to her, where does this girl go from here? Straight to pregnancy, do not pass go, do not collect two hundred dollars from some boy, and on to enlightment? You see, she <u>knows</u> everything.

I was thinking all these thing last night with the sounds of fourteen year olds humping floating in my open windows. I was thinking about the things I knew. I was thinking, does the thirty year old woman that works next to me at the factory, watch me and curse, "She thinks she knows <u>everything</u>..."?

Because I don't. Know everything, I mean. I did once, but it wasn't when I was fourteen and it isn't now.

The fourteen year old girl that lives next door knows everything except one thing... you can't keep that knowledge forever.

Maria Mellinger

A LITTLE SEA NYMPH FELL OUT OF

A little sea nymph fell out of
My faucet as I drew a bath last night.
She must have come all the way from
The Atlantic and into our irrigation system,
With a message for me:
"The boy at sea has not forgotten,
He is coming home for you."

Steev Custer

HE OPENED HIS BIG MOUTH

He opened his big mouth
but this time his sharp scissor
tongue did not meet
its mark.

No, this time the cinder blocks
of embarrasment fell out,
and they were replaced
with the sweet smell
and taste of foot.

Steev Custer

SHAKING THE CAGE

Shaking the cage
in which I'm contained,
will not make me do as you
say.

Planning and plotting my course
will not make
me travel to the
places you want me to see.

Putting tape over my mouth
will not stop me
from kissing the girl with
pixies for friends.
It will
make me want to kiss
her more.

Tana Blanchard

LANTERN

Night
Heralds
The vampire
Killing until
Dawn.

Shelly Partilla

I"M BUILDING, BUILDING

I'm building, building
ladders to your heart
But all I'm really good at
Is romping in mud puddles
Beneath your feet.

I'm falling, falling
In love with you
And I never catch your hints
Meant to send me away.
I always thought love removed mud stains.

Steev Custer

Sing

The electric chair
buzzed in the
darkness of
the spray-painted
black room,
and the souls
of so many
whispered solutions.

I sat, strapped
myself in, smiled
and finally
sang salutations
in solitude.
Only then
did I realize
that I couldn't
reach
the
switch.

Maria Mellinger

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

A piece of Miss Havisham's wedding cake rots
In grand tradition
I am the next to marry.

Maria Mellinger

AN APRICOT KISSED MY LIPS

An apricot kissed my lips
Open mouth,
Dripping sweet juices
On my tongue,
A pale moustache of fuzz
On her cheek.
My teeth pulled her
Pulp further into me,
Pulling, gulping, pulling,
Swallowing.
Licking the delicious wound I made,
Licking the last of her kiss,
I desire
An orchard
Of her.

Shelly Partilla

I WROTE YOUR NAME

I wrote your name a thousand times upon
my soul
In a frantic effort to keep our love alive.
And just when I thought I was convinced,
I noticed that my pen was out of ink.

Maria Mellinger

FROM BOARDWALK TO HICKORY STREET

I can not explain how you took my friend away from me, I only know it's true. The games we played together had to end when he grew up, left, and played house with you. I'm too young to understand love, but like is a comfortable concept. I liked him. You said you loved him. Puh-leez! Take a hike! This is another game for you, a whim you chose to include me in. Well, I quit the game and I quit being friends and I quit being a good loser and that shit. I can't explain how you took him or why, I only know it's true. He chose his monopoly piece and you.

Donica Rampa

SAVAGE SOULS ARE RISING

Savage Souls are rising,
hear their primal screams-
Lashing at the binding chains
that suffocate their dreams.

Gypsy spirits beckon,
In pounding rythmic chants
to let the walls disinegrate
and join them in the dance.

Grasp the knowledge pillar.
Search life to understand.
Let passions blaze engulf you.
Hunt freedom while you can.

Sherry Scanlon

SILVER SPOONS

When I was little
I used to look
at the silver spoons
hanging upon your wall

The tiny little
silver spoons
worn and old
about to fall

Designer handles
with different
shapes

Displayed in rows
in the wooden
case

You gave me
the silver spoons
and those
I kept

Those silver spoons
are the only memories
of you
I have left

Jason Smith

DAD

"Where's Dad?" I asked my mother,
Just like when I was a child,
"Maybe he's working late," she said,
"He'll probably be a while."

But I can tell where he's been
When he walks through the door,
And the next morning he'll get up
To go out and drink some more.

I lie in my bed
Crying myself to sleep at night,
Waiting for Dad to come home
And listen to him and Mom fight.

I know he doesn't believe
He's tearing our family apart
And he ever stopped to think
That he's breaking his son's heart.

When I see him when he's drunk
And wish to tear him limb from limb,
I make a promise to myself
To never turn out like him.

Steev Custer

DEAR DIARY

Dancing like a charlatan,
Humming like a peach,
She danced upon the grave
of a long lost cousin,
and her beads clackled
together joyously.

Through major revelations,
hallucinations, and space-
Saucer sightings in his own
mind, he wrote poetry.
This was his life: all of his
life, and nothing of his life.

She hated his writing, and
he hated her dancing.
And so they were happy.

(con't)

DEAR DIARY, continued

There was a balsa-wood box
on top of
her bureau that
contains the life I breathe
and the will I want

We shared a sacred scene
of love and roses, the exotic
places we'd been and would
carry each other. But the
night we did not

appreciate these desires
and then:
it ended

Feeling in black and cigarettes,
She carried a book of frost,
and frowned along with life.

The Little, brown book in her
pocket contained pages of nothing
as did her soul.

She knew that what she would
eventually nominate to fill those
pages would be sacred, and
she hoped.

And she wrote:
Life is a new poem,
Speckled and untouched by
human fingers.
Seconds crawl like creatures
carried by tiny toes and
flowers.
And so must I, for
wind and the ocean
know the currents and tides
by which I am moved

And then, having achieved
the utmost accomplishment,
She felt in neon and
Marlboro Lights, and became
someone new.

Maria Mellinger

THE OCEAN MOVED LIKE A LADY DANCING

The ocean moved like a lady dancing
In flowing robes of green and blue.
She moved, her earrings tiny ships
Listening for the wave of music,
Her pearls calling out to their oysters,
Her song that of a siren.
The land, a lonely man, cried for her,
Trying to lure her with lakes and rivers.
She moved, and his tears filled her waters.

Glenn Terry

THE POWER

A fleeting sight
Like the wind takes flight
It is psychometry
An alien geometry
It causes my head to ache
As my sanity it takes

Yes, I knew
you could tell by the picture I drew
It was something completely new
But what it was alluding to
All this before the future is made
But alas, I have no power to change

Lauri Stahl

TINY FEET

TINY FEET WALKING
AS YOU HOLD MY FINGER TIPS
GIGGLING AND LAUGHING
MORE MELODIC THAN SINGER'S LIPS.

TINY FEET WALKING
EVERY ROOM THE HOUSE ROUND.
PROBING EVERY NOOK AND CORNER
MAKING ALL FAMILIAR GROUND.

TINY FEET WALKING
I KNOW NOT WHERE ELSE YOU MAY TRAVEL
BUT ALREADY YOU HAVE STRODE RIGHT IN
TO CONQUER AND MY HEART UNRAVEL.

Jennifer Jay

WITH A HANDFUL OF BACHELOR BUTTONS

In his bed we lay,
the room so pitch and black
that I cannot see him
Sniveling
over the reasons I give
for the faith I lack.

To escape this awkward moment
caused by my needless attack,
my mind roams the darkness
Searching
for some tangible form
in the room so pitch black.

A soft orange glow
flows from the heating pad's dial,
growing warmer and drawing me in,
Softening
the wall just like the nightlight
in my grandparent's parlor.

My grandparents! What a wonderful trip.
Running down the hall
With a handful
of bachelor buttons
Smiling
at Grandma who's
peeling and slicing apples
Dancing the Polka
with Grandpa
Playing Gin
the sheepdog
with one brown
one blue eye
Chasing him with an empty box
"Gonna put you in,
Dougie Dougie"
Gentle amber
nightlight
leading to morning
I'm special
I get to stir the orange juice
And
have half a cup
of coffee
with lots of sugar
and lots of cream

(con't)

WITH A HANDFUL OF BACHELOR BUTTONS,
continued

"Why should you be scared:
I'm not afraid of love."
I still cannot see him
Sniveling
in the pitch black room.

After such pleasant reminiscing,
I want to rise above
Sniveling.
I look at the heating pad dial and say,
"No, I am not afraid of love."

Maria Mellinger

SHIN-HSIANG-KU

The Lady of the Dragon's Triangle took a step towards the cobra's dampened throne, located at the end of a tangle of sea weed, sea salt, and his pets of stone-garygoyles named Pride, Envy, Greed, and Hatred. Pride looked on the female pirate with lips of the sea and demanded to be fed her beauty. Envy, the lover of ships, demanded her bounty. The youngest, Greed, would have all the woman left behind. The ocean cobra's pets fulfilled his need to capture the land dwellers of proud mind and strong spine, but Hatred killed his brothers and his master for private love.

Donica Rampa

SIT-N-SPIN

Red, Orange, Yellow
red, orange, yellow.
spinning, swirling, and blending,
faster, faster, and then-
So fast you'll get sick if you
Close your eyes,
or Open your eyes.

So you shriek and go faster,
maybe you'll fly away
and miss bathtime.

Brent Senholtz

UNEMPLOYED

Slowly becoming one with the remote control
A million trips to the refrigerator
Forty cigarettes piled in a pyramid fashion
A glance or two at the books that need reading

Waiting for a phone call
Filling out ten more applications
My bank book remains in my pocket
Just waiting for another drastic withdrawal
to be typed onto its pages

No energy left for even television
The remote has become glued to my palm
My palm,perhaps, is in deparate need for a reading
The psychic lady could remove the remote
and place labor on these palms

Do I actually feel like working
Maybe it's just the idea of becoming fat
and worthless that scares me
After all, I'm living the life that most
people would die for
Of course, my pockets are vacant, but there's
no cost to sit on my ass and watch
the leaves blow through my backyard

With a shower I feel ready to take
on the world
Yes, I'm clean now, but for what reason
Maybe some female passerby will notice
My sparkling skin as I walk to the
mailbox in an excited frenzy
Excited because this is the hardest task
I've taken on today

What's this, a letter from my streesed out
friend who's attending the U of I
He studies an average of 6 hours per
night
What a responsible young lad
Oh well, he's unemployed also

So why should I bother worrying
I can now gain the ten pounds that
I've desired for months
But the scale contradicts this desire
The sight of my ribs probably looks
attractive anyway
(con't)

UNEMPLOYED,continued

No longer, will this trivial dilemma
keep me stressed
I will rise from my couch
Empty the ash-tray
Read the entire newspaper
Especially the want-ads
Clean the house
And as routine would have it, plop down
on my bed and sleep until my next
employer dares to phone my home

Donica Rampa

NEW AND IMPROVED

Its pretty sad
You dumped me for
A REAL WOMAN
with
dyed hair
colored contacts
wipe-on tan
and plastic boobs
Just think how much
time and money
You could have saved if she
Inflated to 20 lbs!

Shelly Partilla

WE SWUNG BY MOONLIGHT

We swung by moonlight
And never said a word-
Just the three of us.
Not musketeers;
Not blind mice;
Just friends.
Giggling barefoot
And trying to touch a treelimb
Trying to touch us.
We were flexing our freedom
With our midnight rendevous-
Maybe making up for lost time;
Maybe making time stand still.
And for a while, we forgot
About life
About death
About love
And tried to see who could
Swing the highest.

Mark Darwyn

AVERAGE NIGHT

Gliding on a soul cloud in the midnight heavens,
between mindstream and the recesses of my brain.
Memories gone and still to come impede on me,
Friends long gone, while others still holding me to blame.

A golden-hued desert, where I sit in lotus,
the sweet sense of solipsism saving my soul.
But even here, in dreams, the nightmares will find me,
dark thoughts raining on me like fragments of black coal.

Captain Valor, the superhero, walks the streets,
Strutting as proud as his six-four frame will allow.
But when I fly after a woman in distress,
I lose control and into a building, kapow!

Sweaty in the sheets, I retreat to safer grounds,
but I'm followed by the Creature Feature Brigade.
I'm pinned and about to be torn apart by hounds,
but then I appear in the bed of my dream babe.

At her brown eyes and slender feet I have to stare,
as she lays me back and prepares to dress me bare.
But just as her lips are about to reach my (blank),
those damn monsters are running up to our left flank.

My magic dream carpet then decides to come home,
back to my body which is lying all alone.
It merges with me, I feel a tinge in my brain,
as I awake in bed at sounds of the night train.

Steev Custer

PARANOIA AND A KISS

Paranoia and a kiss walked
hand in hand, not knowing that betrayal
was their shroud. They walked through
dandelion days, with tigers by their
feet and vultures perched stop their
heads. Their hands grew intertwined
like Ivy, and their dreams became
arguments, and then the arguments became too
frequent. Finally, through revelations
of treason; paranoia desired to become
stronger, and went away to do so.
The kiss floated to someone else's lips.

Maria Mellinger

THIS STORY'S NAME IS BOB

"Vicki? Vicki, I lost Bob." Jenni was crying. She pulled at the print of her psychadelic dress, stretching the neckline as if her guilt were bulging in her throat like a bullfrog's croaking apologies,"I'm sorry. God, Vicki, I'm so sorry." Drunks danced through the dark room and into th'hallway, towards the kitchen. Jenni wanted to go with them, but her anxiety tied her down in the swamp with the bayou vines. "Did I say I was sorry" Really, I am."

"I lost my shoe," cried another girl. She walked with a limp to further the point.

"Casey Jones, you better watch your speed," sang Luttrell to the half barefoot girl.

"I'm not high and I'm not in love," she whined. "I just lost my god damned shoe."

"I lost Bob," Jenni repeated.

Vicki, calm and quite drunk, took Jenni's hand."We'll find him," she whispered as if she were a drama major. Really, she was a pharmacy major, but she dressed different and people assumed she must be in the arts. The closest she ever got to art, however, was either when Zydeco carved a pipe for Bob or when she and Jenni mend Old Style can costumes, Bob's size included. "As god is our witness, we'll find him. . ."

"Andy is god!" shouted a tall blonde boy, son of the owner's of this party house, part time musician and often busboy, Andy's best friend.

"Did I mention I'm an atheist now?" said the girl with one shoe. She located the second one and put it on once and for all.

"Have you seen Bob?" Vicki asked her.

"I saw him earlier with some black guy."

"Oh, god! Bob's with a black guy!" Jenni cried.

"Andy is god!" the blonde boy answered.

"I'm sure they're not doing anything, Jen," said Vicki. "We'll get Bob back."

Vicki, Jenni, and Bob met at work. Vicki was the theatre's candy girl of the month, and Bob was the prize. Jenni just got to be friends with them both. Bob was a Charlie McCarthey dummy, complete with tuxedo and monocle, a simple smile, and great intellectual capabilities when in the right hands.

The first night Vicki and Bob were together they cruised the White Castle with Jenni. "Hey, look at the dummy!" the stoners would shout as Bob hung out the car window.

"Who are you callin' dummy?" Someone would ask. Riots broke out soon after. Structural damage was done to the drive-thru and Bob was banned from the burger joint.

The next day at work, during a lull in the theatre business, the employees formed a pyramid in the lobby. Bob, being the lightest was placed at the very top, but his position was shaky and he began to fall. Luckily said fall was stopped by a boy's head, which only bled a little. Really, the bump isn't too noticeable when his hair is long.

Two days ot of his box and Bob was known as a party dummy. Invitations were now extended to Vicki, Jenni, and Bob. No event was noteworthy unless Bob made his appearance. He went bowling at the Tivoly, had dinner at Omega, and watched over the candy line when the girls had to sneak away at work.

That's not to say there weren't bad times for Bob and his women. A girl in Jenni's fiction class took to writing stories about her teddy bear, and for awhile this "Theodora" got considerable more attention. But when the teacher suggested that the girl's obsession with a female bear was a latent symbol of her lesbian tendencies and compulsive behavior, she began to leave Theodora at home when she went to parties, eventually leaving herself home, as well.

Another time Bob's jaw was mysteriously broken, perhaps due to a return to the White Castle. At any rate, Jenni asked for a paper clip at work the following afternoon, "to fix Bob's jaw."

"What happened?" asked the new boy. who had not yet met Bob.

"We were out last night and somebody just broke his jaw," explained Vicki. "Really, we're not sure how it happened."

"God, that's terrible," the boy answered.

"But Vicki's studying pharmacy," explained Jenni, and they teach you to fix people's jaws with office supplies."

"Really?"

"Really."

The party continued while Vicki and Jenni searched for Bob. Jenni grew nervous with each passing minute,like a high school student out of place at this very same gathering, out past curfew times two, begging for the acceptance of alcholic students a few years older. Vicki was as sedate as those passed out in the bathroom between the tub and the toilet.

Next to the stereo the girl who had lost her shoe went barefoot again and danced with Luttrell. The blonge guy was quiet in a corner, searching for an audience.

(con't)

A conga line bumped its way through e hall, Bob dangling from the shoulders of a stray punk. His tuxedo rubbed against the punk's t-shirt, his wooden body causing bruises that would not be noticed until tomorrow, and would never be understood. "Did I fall down the stairs again?" the punk would ask, and no one would be quite sure if the answer was yes or no.

Bob's monocle danced in the air past Vicki and Jenni's turned backs. "Bob?" Jenni called. "Where are you?"

He didn't answer.

Bob had lost his monocle dancing at the last party he went to. The line up was the bunny hop, I believe, and his eyepiece escaped somehow. At the end of the night Jenni cried, "Vicki, really. I'm sorry. I should've been wathching him." Vicki stayed calm as ever.

The following morning the trio ventured to Oakbrook theatres, demanding, "Manager, please."

In the box office, next to the machine where tickets were sold, sat Bob's double. No one had won concessions of the month at Oakbrook and their Bob sat, waiting, waiting. He was a sedentary Bob.

"...And our Bob's a party Bob," explained Vicki to the candy girl, who only got paid minimum wage and didn't care much regardless.

"...So we need your Bob's monicle," Jenni told the manager. "We're going to the Art Institute Wednesday. He has to see the Monet. Really."

Sedentary Bob bestowed his monocle on his active relative, jealously burrowing like termites deep into his wooden heart, making sawdust of his dreams. He stared out the box ofice window in silence.

Bob, on the way home, waved out the window at the White Castle crowd. Four people were arrested for fighting and the grease trap was set on fire to the shouts of "Who's a dummy? You callin' me a dummy?"

Wandering from room to room, strangeness to coolness to dead beat drunkeness, Vicki and Jenni continued searching.

In one corner of the living room, a girl with a cigar box in her hand was pouring vodka on the carpet and trying to set a fire. "I knew it wouldn't work," she mumbled. "I knew he was innocent."

In the garage, people sat in a circle, listening to a college radio station. Two girls were on the phone with the dj, dedicating Grateful Dead songs to a boy with an open fly. The dj's girlfriend danced alone in the circle's center.

In the host's kitchen, a couple named Stare and Brigette were alternately fighting and making out. Another couple, weirdos named Arek and Lissie, were said to be "performing" at the kitchen table. They ate the host's food and called the show "Dinner."

Vicki and Jenni journeyed through the jungle of people, with New Kids on the Block music as background sound. I t reminded Jenni of her own party last week, when Bob was safe sitting next to her, and the girl with the cigar box insisted that the nine "Ohs" in the song "The Right Stuff" counted as a sentence in a sing along game. "You counted-'She loves you, yeah, yeah,yeah,' as six words, " she yelled. "What's the problem with 'Oh Oh Oh Oh Oh Oh Oh Oh Oh'?"

A vast river of alcohol interrupted the flow of the jungle and Jenni stopped for a drink. For a moment she forgot about Vicki, Bob, and the loneliness she forever felt. Vicki took a boy, but Jenni brought Bob to prom senior year. And with a group of four girls stole a statue of Jesus for a prank the last week of high school, Jenni only dressed Bob in a Catholic school girl's uniform for a few days.

"Really, Jen," said Vicki. "Let's look some more."

Jenni reluctantly left the leg behin d the bamboo and wild animals in favor of the eternal Bob Search. She felt as if she should dress in Banana Republic gear and keep a journal of the keg, holding open the host's very own journal. "Andy is god, " the host wrote, over and over.

Whenever the two friends fought, Vicki would cancel Jenni's visitation rights, and Bob would party hop without her, Vicki had so many people in her life, interesting pharmacy facts to tell, thoughts to share. Jenni only had Bob, her little wooden outlook on life.

When Jenni was six, she put all her stuffed animals in a heavy duty green plastic bag to take to show and tell. She carefully placed the animals outside on the curb, where she would pass them in the morning on her way to school. Before going in she kissed each one and said "I love you." She held her red eared, blue pawed bulldog, Bob, the longest. In the morning, they were gone.

Although she'd been in therapy, Jenni never trusted people again. Each person she met over the next fifteen years could very well have been kind, interesting, or suitable for marriage. They also cold have been the owner o f one heavy duty green plastic bag full of stuffed animals, stolen from so many years ago. But, Vicki and Bob were different.

(con't)

THIS STORY"S NAME IS BOB, continued

"Bob?Bob, answer me!" Jenni mumbled. "Vicki, where could he have gone? Why would anyone want to take Bob away from me?"

The two cruised through the vast caverns of the party--past the stony punk and his girlfriend, arguing; past a girl home from Florida, bragging about being a hoodless woman in a sideshow; past Arek and Lissie, performing "sitting" on the living room couch--until finally, Bob passed them, in the arms of a beautiful woman.

"Oh god, he's cheationg on me!" Jenni yelled. "I knew it would never last. Really, oh god."

"Andy is god!" screamed the blonde boy, strumming the opening chords of "Nabby's" on his guitar.

Jenni ran from the party and into the street. Vicki, confused and quite thirsty, remained.

The psychadelic print of Jenni's dress danced on her thighs as she ran. The collar flapped up into her face, smearing her tears. She ran past the neighbors wide open windows, where, had she paused, she would have heard them telling the police, "The party's been going on all damn night! I'm a working man; I have to get up in the morning!" She ran until the psychadelic print grew tired and clung to her body with its multicolored sweat. She stopped at a series of garbage cans, a sitcom of somebody's leftovers.

Inside, a garage sale sign sighed defeat. It could not sell its wares today; they were destined for the dump. Some torn pillows bled feathers onto old kitchen crockery. Bracelets and baubles longed for the party that the police were now breaking up. A prom dress slept unaware, dreaming of the next dance; perhaps she could still enjoy one at the landfill. To the left of it all rested a large green frog. His polyester stuffing bulged a little behind his crooked plastic eyes, and a pork chop had attached itself to his front flipper, but to Jenni , he was beautiful.

He did not deserve to be left on the curb.

She removed him from the can, brushed the evening's dinner remains off, and kissed his red yarn smile. As a police car drove past carrying a cargo of underage drinkers and a wooden dummy with handcuffs about his throat, Jenni walked to her house with her new friend. She did not name him Bob.

Jennifer Jay

MEN ARE GOD'S DIVERSE CREATIONS

Men are God's diverse creations.
Look at all the shapes and sizes,
the sexes, and ethnic variations.

Names are man's diverse creations.
Look at all the vulgar labels,
stereotypes, and ethnic desecration.

Fattbutt, whale, thunder thighs.
Skinny, pencil neck, bag o' bones,
Just some descriptions for a persons size.

Names for the sexes are even harder to beat.
Bitches, broads, and chicks.
Bastards, hunks, and meat.

Ethnic groups are the most prolific.
Sandniggers, pullstarts, dotheads.
Honky, redneck, whitey.
Spearchugger, moon cricket, shiner.
Spick, wetback, beaner.
These names get even more specific,
but I have offended you enough already.

Please understand, I am also offended
by the fact that there was a list
of cruel labels from which I could choose.
The vulgar list is longer, I am sure,
than the one of respect and humaneness.
The one we use the least.

Steev Custer

I REMEMBER THE TIME

I remember the time
the car got towed:
we walked, hand in hand, together.

I remember the time
that you fell ill:
we walked, hand in hand, to safety.

I remember the times
that we were scared:
we walked, hand in hand, to security.

I remember the time
I lost my mind:
you walked, hand in glove, away.

Maria Mellinger

LITTLE BEWILDERED GIRL

"Feed you r head," the doormouse said,
But I want to be starved clean instead.
I'm so full of you.

Shelly Partilla

A MAN WITH A THOUSAND NAMES

A man with a thousand names
Walked right up and sat down beside me
Without a word.
He took a small piece of my heart,
covered in lint,
Out of his pocket
And gently held it up to me.
I graciosly declined
Since one small piece of my heart was
worthless
When you still had the rest.

Mark Darywn

MY FATHER AND I

Dad sits in his chair
watching TV alone
in the dark family room.
The light from the TV
blinks and changes color
on his impassive face.
The sounds from the TV
reach his ears but denote
no response from his person.
He sits for hours
at a time like this,
and he is not dumb
or slow witted.
When he and I were young
my daddy would take me
with him on his truck driving trips.
His dark, rich hair absorbed
the incoming sun.
His bright smile echoed
love for me and his job.
On good nights, which were many,
Daddy brought gifts to me,
and from my bed I could hear
him offer soft, soothing words
to my mommy.
The layoff in '82
hit us very hard,
and Dad has slowly
changed since then.
When I ride with him now
the sun merely shines
through his grey hair
onto his scalp.
When Dad laughs
his wrinkled face
it often concerns things
beyond his control that he
tries to take lightly.
But I much prefer that image
to the one of Dad
sitting gravely alone
by the TV set. So I
sit by him now and
inherit his shame.

Maria Mellinger

"PETALS ON A WET, BLACK BOUGH"

The Sabbath passed with my obsession intact-
An eerie religion of empty church pews
Where lovers once sat.

Lauri Stahl

HISTORY LESSON

A HISTORY BOOK UPON MY DESK
MY HANDS UPHOLD MY HEAD
AS IF THEIR MERE TOUCH COULD HOLD
INSIDE THE INFO I JUST READ.

IT'S NOT THAT I FIND THE FACTS
BORING OR SEEMINGLY DRY;
I JUST WISH I HAD BEEN THERE
TO KNOW MORE OF THE HOW AND WHY.

TO BE THERE IN PERSON
TO HAVE MET AND CONSORT
WITH ROMANS AND PIRATES
OR DEAR MAD BONAPARTE.

I'D ASK CLEO WHY BLACK EYESHADOW?
AND, IS MARK REALLY SUCH A HUNK?
I'D QUERY AS TO WHY HE MADE
SO MANY TAKE A WALK AND GO "KER-PLUNK"

AND BONAPARTE, SILLY BONAPARTE,
WHY DO YOU HOLD YOUR HAND THAT WAY?
UPON STARING AT YOUR PICTURE
I'D THINK YOUR HANDS IN THERE TO PLAY.

(con't)

HISTORY LESSON, continued

HISTORIANS HAVE ACCURATELY KEPT
MOST OF THE PERTINENT DETAILS AND FACTS.
BUT WHEN IT COMES TO PERSONAL GOSSIP
THEIR RECORD KEEPING IS LAX!

Jennifer Jay

JUSTICE

"Pleased to meet you, Mr. Truth," I said.

He couldn't hear me from the front of the classroom. I would not have been embarrassed if he had heard me. He knew anyway how I admired him. Yes, the only man I have ever known to be truly idealistic wothout being hypocritical--it still amazes me, even now, seven years later.

Magruder had opened the door to the world for me, and had done it with a fantastic medium. No one in my English class had been so profoundly changed by Magruder as I had been. So now, seven years later, I smile upon my first class of English that I will ever teach. Will I live up to the superiority Magruder had in the field? Probably not. Although I may stand on my desk (done long before Dead Poet's Society), turn a somersault, teach outside, and show movies the administration may not approve of, though I may be a constant fascination to my pupils and open their minds to life through literature, I will surely never be another Magruder. All I can ever be is his student, never his equal, forbidden to be his superior. Yet my magnificent guru(yes, I go so far as to call him aguru) holds me benevolently as his own, long after I have passes his high school class. My adoration has not ceased, nor will it ever cease.

But I must admit that there were times when I was still in high school, that I felt Magruder ahd found some dislikable trait in me, and that he would not give me the attention that I wanted. That I needed. But during class I would realize that he had a slight favoritism towards me. I had tried hard to show him my extreme interest in literature and in his teaching style and in him himself. How clear it comes to me, that interesting smile of his. You could tell he was smiling when two beaver-like teeth were exposed amid his beard and moustache. The way his jaw looked reminded me of a great nest, the two teeth tiny eggs. Magruder had many wrinkles,laugh lines, and his eyes sucked in whenever he smiled, as he is now.

He was life, he was truth. Wisdom,passion, he was happiness and love. He was justice, honor, he was black and he was white. He was virtue and lust, dignity and faith. A child, and perhaps the loveliest man I had ever known. His faults were taken with the most honesty and grace a person has ever taken faults with.

I would be lying to say that I did not love Magruder. I love him as I might love Jesus; I have more faith in him than I have in Jesus. Am I exagerrating? No! This man, this teacher, was the most influential persom in mylife. So influential that I became a teacher also. Although I will never be as great as Magruder, I still must teach. That way I can at least be part of Magruder's realm.

He told me once that he became a teacher because of an English teacher he used to have when he was younger. She would act out segments from Macbeth. She captured him just as he captured me. I guess I would like to be so bold as to think I am a link in a chain of great teachers, one influencing another as the education process continues. Perhaps my teaching will make one of my pupils turn to a teaching career and carry on this unspoken tradition of teaching.

As I smile upon my first class of my career, I hope the chain is true and will continue. Why shouldn't it be true? Magruder always told me to never stop questioning. The I can keep an open mind--a most important key to learning.

Cool mist rose from the fields. Hector Magruder couldn't see it, he could only taste the mist and feel it dampen his cheeks. At two in the morning, you couldn't see anything on the farm. Hec was silently slipping into his boots when he caught a swinging light floating up the trail. They were here. Now they could take care of this problem once and for all. He joined the group and they moved down the trail without speaking a word. Hec turned his head over his shoulder once to catch sight of his house. Milly was surely still asleep, as were Gary and Emily. Even if they were asleep, they still knew what the men were going to do . Gary had overheard his father talking to Walt about the plan.

"Hey Walt. Come on over here a minute. Now quiet, quiet. You know that nigger that farms at the hill 'round by the Turner's place? Yeah, that small piece o' land over the hill and some way down to the valley. Well that dirty nigger's got himself a mule. What he need a mule for with that small piece? Why I've got four times as much land, and I don't got a mule. Neither does Sam or John or ol'Dave, not even you. I say we go get our justice. Ain't no nigger on a little plot of land gonna have a mule before any white man with some real white land to work with has got one."

(con't)

JUSTICE, continued

Hec told Walt what the 'justice' would be. With that information, Gary flew to the house.

"Ma! Ma! Daddy's going to sneak over to the Johnson farm tonight to...."

Hec walked in and said, "Now, Milly, it just ain't fair for a nigger to have a mule when a decent, hard-working man doesn't."

But Milly waved off his comment. Whether or not she approved, Hec would still go through with it. She told Gary to fetch Emily and then both of them could wash for supper.

Gary watched the swinging lantern trail down the path toward the Johnson farm. The mist made the hay wet and flexible, and it was quite sobering under Gary's bare feet. He knew he would just get a licking if he tried to stop the men, so he stood there helplessly. The little light finally faded. Gary stared at its direction for some time afterwards, then knelt in the hay and fell asleep.

Nothing came, and Hec seemed particularly happy; it was unusual that he should be anything else but stern, especially in the early morning. Gary already knew that the clan must have succeeded last night, but his mother gave Hec an inquiring look. How could she not know on her own was a mystery to Gary. His father's smile at her questioning look was her affirmation.

Right after breakfast, Gary took feed to the kitchen pen. He couldn't keep his mind off the mule, how the men must have crowded her in and got their 'justice' just as she flashed wild, painful eyes. The thought overwhelmed him, and the heat, the musty smell of damp hay, the way the lanternlight wildly swung and lit up the walls and ceiling filled his head. Gary could see his father's mouth twisted in anger, twisted in jealously. The thoughts pushed him to the ground with a flood of tears.

"All because he's a black man," Gary thought.

Hec came around to the chicken pen. Astonished at seeing his boy in the dust, Hec told Gary to get up.

"Now what's the matter, son?"

Gary just turned his sobbing face to his father, and glints of anger shot up through the tears. Hec had never seen him cry before.

Maria Mellinger

DAMN

I rested in voluntary exile,
Digressed into obsession,
Found desolation in my solitude.
I gave up my fantasy for friends.
They, too, are not real.

Shelly Partilla

NOTHING EVER HAPPENED

You stood ther like some limp fool
Waiting for your cue to jump into
my life.
And I stood there like some
babbling idiot
Waiting for you to jump.

SteevCuster

TODAY, AFTER A PAINFULLY LONG TIME

Today, after a painfully long time, I saw you: a walking, talking, Long Island Ice Tea. The glass in which you contained yourself was clear and I could see right through to your volatile, addictive liquid personality. The subtemporate emotions that cooled your alcoholic appearance were properly in place, on the top, where no one could break through. Watching you sip around the room made me sober up and take a swig of my nice , cold coke.

Mark Darwyn

I'M SURE I WONDER WHY

In the Andromeda galaxy
untold millions of suns
burn their fires of light
that now pierce my eyes and brain.
I look upo at them and wonder why.

I have drudged two hundred feet into
this farmer's rolling dirt field
to be alone with the stars
and my 'scope.
But my thoughts are with me also.

The Crab looks good tonight.
Blue and green and
gaseous. Just like the blowing trees
silhouetted on the horizon. Gaseous.

(con't)

I'M SURE I WONDER WHY, continued

Sometimes the 'scope shakes a little
in the wind that chills my back.
The sights of space blend
with the sound of earth. Car
noises from the nearby road
invade the natural wonders.
Somewhere on connection roads
a car accident is occurring and
people are dying.
Of this I'm sure.

No light is required here
save the starlit map that
guides me on a galactic journey.

My mind drifts
once more to planet Earth
and to Plainfield town
where father sits now
watching TV I'm sure.

Why are the stars up there?
The crickets chirp.
Is there life up there?
A dog barks in the distance.
What am I here?
I am comfortable
not knowing why.
As I head back to my car
uneasiness rises from within.
Of this I'm sure.

Mark Darwyn

BACKSEAT BERNIE

Backseat Bernie is quite the crude.
In fact, even now he's quite rude.
Back in school he received his name,
when fondling girls became his game.

I know all this since I'm his son.
Even know he fondle s Ma's buns.
You might think I would think it's lame,
but I've grown to be just the same.

Last night we went to Lover's Point
to get my girl to smoke a joint.
But then I saw parked by my car
my Pa and some chick from a bar.

I said, "Pa, who's this in your car?"
"Son, I wouldn't take it that far."
I said, "Pa, now this just won't work."
He said, "Son, we all have our quirks."

After debate, we did our deeds.
In the end, we filled our needs.
I came around to what Pa said, that it's
better than dreaming in our beds.

Maria Mellinger

SCREAMING AT TREES

Screaming at trees,
Dancing like a drunken child,
Worshipping all that is imaginary
To me, I direct a prayer
To the root of all problems.

Shelly Partilla

ONE BY ONE, SNOWFLAKE BY SNOWFLAKE

One by one, snowflake by snowflake
I built the perfect man.
Little by little, he marred my noble vision
With his timid insecurity & lack of
personality.
So I built a fire around his feet
And watched him dance.

Pam Hendricks

INJUSTICE

There are times when the hurts so deep,
there are no words.
The travesty so painful;
no explanation.
When life had the unmitigated gall
to be so unfair,
That an anger wells up inside of me
So strong I think I'll explode.

How this mortal frame can hold such emotion,
I do not know.
Such feeling of physical helplessness.
Discovering in the events of life or death
you have no control.
That things happen regardless
of who you are:
The humbling of the human soul...

Lauri Stahl

BLIND DATE PHOBIA

"I'll call you", he says
With a flashing grin
She holds her breath
And waves good-bye to him.

He'll never call.
I won't sit and wait.
He feel nothing for me.
Well, maybe some hate.

I wish I had brains,
Some talent, or looks.
Maybe I can find these things
In some foreign books.

Shoot, what's the use,
He'll never call.
And that's okay,
He's much too tall.

Who's he think he is
With those eyes of blue,
Black wavy hair,
And those dimples too!

I'll just get undressed
And climb into bed
But all those stupid things
I said just fills up my head.

Well no use fussing
And losing more sleep.
I'll quiet my mind.
Won't think of that creep.

RIINNNNG, RIINNNG, That's the phone!
Hello? Oh, It's you.
"I had a lovely time", he says
Voice smooth as the dew.

Mark Darwyn

THE MIND TRAPPED WITHIN

The mind trapped within
seeks connection with the bodies
of minds trapped within.

Shelly Partilla

LOST IN NOTHING

As I frantically try to find myself,
I hurl my hate for all the world
to see.
I scream for pain at god
And I search for answers to my
unanswerable questions.

As realm of tranquility hovers over
my head-taunting me-
I wish my thoughts were deep enough
to drown my sorrow.
But shallow thoughts from a shallow
mind never get me anywhere.

As a subtle darkness creates dense fog,
I toss my cares out to a sea of sin;
Hoping--almost praying- -no one will
find them
But maybe, at the same time, wishing
someone would.

As I yearn for independence to separate
myself from others,
I cry to a non-feeling world;
Reaching for sympathy(or maybe just
love),
Reaching for happiness (or maybe just
wanting happiness to reach me).

As I look for a kind face in a
stone-faced world,
I grasp for meaning in my life.
Searching for truth, I step on people
along the way.
My stairway to heaven is covered with
blood.

As I look for affection (with no prior experience),
I stumble and no one helps me up.
No helping hands reach out to mine.-
A never-ending void encompasses my
soul.

As I grieve I wonder what it is I'm
really grieving for--
A lost friend; a lost love; a lost god;
Or a lost sense of who I am
with no one standing behind me
with the answers.

Jason Smith

THE LAST TIME

It was happening again. She was sure of it. Tim came back to the apartment late that Thursday. Not very late. Just late enough. "Sorry, darling, something came up," he mumbled. He never took his eyes off the floor. She knew on the instant.

He headed straight for the bathroom; another sign. He showered for nearly twenty minutes. Checking himself for stray hairs and lipstick stains, no doubt; sniffing at himself to make sure every trace of perfume was washed away.

Margaret sat in the living room, knitting. She stared over the tops of the clicking needles. Her lips were pressed together tightly. I will not permit it , she thought. He promised it was the last time.

She had no trouble finding out who it was. She knew it would be someone young, first of all. Someone blonde. Someone accessible, but not so close as to cause trouble when it was over. She knew they wouldn't meet after work too often. Tim wouldn't want Margaret to become suspicious. Not after the promise he'd made to her. Tim was an account executive at an advertising firm and took long lunches. For the most part, it would be then, thought Margaret.

Around noon on the next Monday, she planted herself on the corner of Madison Avenue, across from the stately old office tower which housed Tim's firm, and waited. She didn't disguise herself or hide behind a newspaper , or anything like that, She wasn't some sleazy private detective. She simply stood and watched the entrance. She trusted the Manhatten lunch hour crowds to hide her well enough.

Her husband came out at around twelve-thirty and headed north up Madison. Margaret followed. At Fifty-first Street, he turned east, there was really nothing to worry about-- he was walking quickly, without looking back. She kept a safe distance as he passed the row of elegant brownstones between Second and First. One of the brownstones--a fine one, decorated with crafted architecture was his destination.

Margaret hung back and watched him go in. She crossed the street and stared up at the building. The light in the third floor window was the only one on. As she watched, Margaret caught the brief sweep of a fan of golden hair behind the pane, the eager lover rusing to the door.

She went into the hall entrance and checked the name on the mailbox, Nora Wilkins. It seemed to her there had been a Nora once before. There'll be more of them, she thought as she walked away. I'm putting a stop to it here and now. This is the last time.

That night, when Nora Wilkins returned home from whatever ridiculous glamor job it was she held, Margaret was waiting for her. Margaret was firm and she'd made up her mind she was going to act. Nora was more than beautiful. She was nearly perfect--tall and thin, with gently rounded hips and high breasts that made her blouse shiver as she walked. Her face was delicate and sweet, her hair long and shiny gold. Seeing her, Margaret had to get an extra measure of courage before she stepped out to confront her.

"Miss Wilkins," she said. The girl stopped, puzzled. "My name is Margaret Cade."

"I know who you are," Nora said. "Tim has told me about you."

Her composure took Margaret by surprise, but she continued. "Then you know why I'm here."

Nora eyed the small older woman in front of her with distaste. "Yes, but let's not do this in the street, okay?"

Margaret nodded and followed her into the building.

Upstairs, Margaret waited silently while Nora opened her apartment door. They came into a brightly decorated living room. The metal furniture, the posters on the wall; everything decorated with youthfulness. She stood in the center of the room, feeling tired with her brown-grey hair tied in the back, her dark navy jacket buttoned to her neck.

Nora plopped onto a sofa with peach pillows on a shiny metal frame. She stretched her shapely legs out before her. "I didn't think you'd try someting like this, " she said. "Why would you humilate yourself like this?"

Margaret answered quietly, "You'd be surprised at the lenghths one goes to. I hope you never have to learn."

Nora shrugged, "I guess it's different for someone your age."

"I suppose so." There was silence, Margaret could think of nothing to say.

"Lookit," said Nora. "Tim's a grown man. He knows what he wants and what he needs. If you can't handle that, leave him. There's no law saying you have to stay."

"Isn't there?" said Margaret.

"Well, what can I tell you? We all need to make choices in life, Mrs. Cade," Nora replied.

(con't)

THE LAST TIME, continued

"Yes," Margaret said, trying not to keep her voice from trembling. "And I can see you've made yours. Excuse me for bothering you."

She turned, left the apartment, and hurried down the stairs. In another moment she was walking hone speaking to herself over and over again--stupid, stupid, stupid.

When she got home she took out her knitting and sat with it in the easy chair by the phone. It was a quarter past six when the phone rang.

"I'll be a little late this eveninng. Sorry darling," Tim was mumbling. His voice dripped with guilt. "We have to redo an account. It came up suddenly."

Margaret forced herself to smile and said,"That's all right. I have plenty to do."

That is it, she thought as she hung up the phone. This is the last time.

She waited until full dark, then headed to Nora's apartment. This time, the lights in the third-floor window of the elegant brownstone were not on, Margaret walked into the hall and pressed the button next to Nora's name. There was a long pause before Tim's voice came over the speaker. "Who is it?"

"It's your wife," Margaret said. The quiet firmness of her voice surprised even her.

There was another long pause. Then the buzzer went off and the latch of the front door snapped open. Margaret pushed inside.

When she stopped before Nora's door she reached for the doorbell, but Tim cracked the door open before she could ring. The look of terror and confusion in his eyes almost made her feel sorry for him.

"Margaret," he said, "I...."

She pushed the door in, brushed past him into the darkened room. "Turn on the light," she commanded.

Tim did. There was Nora on the floor, her beautiful body bruised and disfigured. The stocking was tied around her neck so tight it was nearly buried in her flesh.

As Margaret stood staring, Tim shuffled up behind her like a small child. "Please, please. You have to help me. I don't know what to do."

"Oh ,all right,' she said angrily, "But this is absolutely the last time, you understand?"

Jennifer Jay

THE MONSTROUS ARMS OF

The monstrous arms of
my shadow clutch the hill
and tear out tree roots

Michelle Forys

FUNHOUSE

My fingers were sticky
from pink cotton candy
but I plunged them in my pockets anyway.

The tickets inside
I pulled out for the ride
and waited to be on my way.

"It's an awful fright,
a white-knuckle delight,"
the carnival man did say.

Through the cave I was pulled
full of darkness untold
but nothing made my nine year-old head gray.

Screams rang in my ears
other chidren's panic and fears
so all the louder I would pray.

Shelly Partilla

AROUND THE BLOCK

I put up maps on all my walls
To remind myself of where I'd go.
I took down your pictures from my walls
To forget everywhere I'd been.

Jennifer Jay

THE SWANS OF WOODLAWN

The swans of woodlawn
are penned in the dead boy
whose grave is nearby.

Maria Mellinger

I OPENED A LETTER FROM JERRY AND FOUND

I opened a letter from Jerry and found
Small seeds of eccentricity in the envelope-
I had forgotten to water my plants
And my friend somehow sensed their death.
I cupped my hand and held the earth.
Matches burned like little suns around
The ocean I fashioned from the sink,
Complete with a Bermuda Triangle of scented soap.
When they sprouted, I took my young plants
Everywhere with me and was able
To speak intellectually although a great glob
Of egg attached itself to my upper lip
In a dirty restaurant. I could
Go without washing my hair for a week
Because eccentric flowers fill the air
With oils of the spirited sky.
I was somehow special for the world
I held in my hand. Then someone questioned
My integrity, my individuality, my right
To illegal eccentricity seeds in today's age.
In my upset I reached to hide my face
With my hands, and spilled my universe
On the floor. Angry at the umpire of accidents,
I kicked the dirt on home plate and
Was thrown out of the game.
Jerry's seeds took root all across the diamond.

Steev Custer

THE DARK ROOM SANG FOR ME

The dark room sang for me, it smiled at me. Yes, it bid me hello and wecomed me into its sadness. "The rain cannot touch you here." It offered, and so I sat.

The rains came and beat on the windows, trying to tatter them down and consume me, but I was contained in the ebony box of depression.

And here I sit, a shell inside a shell, waiting for the someone with a key.

Jennifer Jay

GOLD LOCKS AND CARVED JADE

Gold locks and carved jade
adorn the Oriental
box of cherry-wood.

Maria Mellinger

KAPSEL

When the doctor said my broker was dying, I planted bottlecaps in the backyard. I was five and had grown beans in a styrofoam cup in kindergarten. Denny was three and couldn't die without his own coffee cup garden. I hoped that planting bottlecaps would help.

I expected medicines to spprout from the seeds, especially since I buried each one with a goldfish, like the indians used to do. Mom was pretty mad about the fish part, but I was sure leaves would grow up and roots down, a flower would smile like the pictures in my coloring books, and everything would be in sixty four colors like the crayola box, not white, white, white like the hospitals. Denny believed it would work, too, but asked me to save a couple caps in case it didn't.

It didn't.

They put my brother in a box and then they put him in the ground. There was snow. Everything was white. Daddy and the other guys that carried Denny threw the gloves they wore into the hole and Mom put down some flowers. I threw down all the wasted bottlecaps- 7 UP, Pepsi, Nehi- and wathced them die.

Lauri Stahl

THOUGHTS OF AN INSOMNIAC

The sandman once again evades me.
At my house he came and called.
Sprinkled his magic dust for all
Except for me. For me
he filled my head with nonsense rhyme.
So I write it down to work on some later time.

Steev Custer

IN A STRAIGHT LINE

In a straight line, I see anarchy, disorder. In a Crest Hill cop car, I see my girl. In love, I see betrayal, and it sees me. As I look down at my feet, the ground smiles up at me. "This is where you are." it says, and I agree. I am the Al Capone of emotion, demanding everyone to everything , always my way.

Glen Terry

TWO MINUTE WARNING

"Who are you?" Norville Stewart asked as the shadowy figure moved away from the corner of the room, but only slightly.

"That's hardly important, but if it matters to you, you may call me Miserke," replied the tenebrous shape. It stuck close to the gloomier parts of the dark office, as if unwilling to allow the light from the solitary desk lamp to fall upon it's form.

"Maresork? What the...," Norville began with an uneasy glance at the unidentifiable image before him.

"It is pronounce Mir, as in 'mirror', -sir-k. Don't say it wrong again. I have a thing about that sort of stuff. A, how do you say? Pet peeve? Anyway, I assure you, I can be a rather unpleasant fellow."

"Really?" Norville asked, squinting to get a glimpse at his strange visitor. It was difficult to tell where the person stopped and the darkness began. Norville wondered how much he could really see and how much his imagination was filling in.

Norville should have been alone in the building, with the exception of Dan the security guard. How did this guy get in here, anyhow? Norville wondered about that.

"Look, Miserke, I'm a busy man, so if you could tell me just why you're here..." Getting control of himself, Norville stopped squinting and looked down at his stack of paperwork with feigned annoyance.

"I'm here to destroy you in the name of revenge," answered Miserke with the monotonous stoicism of a statue.

Norville's jaw went slack as he looked up. "Revenge? For who? For what? I've never done anything t-"

"Are you familiar with the name Tina Fry?" Miserke interrupted dipassionately.

"No, should I?"

"You raped her on March 23rd, 1992," Miserke stated apathetically.

"How did you know, my n-" Norvile began.

"Name wasn't Norville Stewart then, yes, I am aware of this technicality."

"Then how did you...," Norville's voice died.

"This is all irrevelant. I'm here to destroy you," the shade said distantly.

"Right now?" Norville said stupidly.

"Actually, no. This is your two minute warning."

"My what?" Norville queried incedulously.

(con't)

"Two minutes, get your shit together," suggested the phantom matter-of-factly.

"You mean I get two minutes? Can I use it to get a head start?" The accountant questioned opportunistically.

"If you wish," replied Miserke indifferently. *"You can't run from me, and there is no place on earth you can hide from me."*

"What about money" I have...you don't do this for money, do you?"

"No," answered the wraith glacially.

"Then why do you do it?"

"I am vengeance incarnate. I am the Law of Hammurabi. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth..." came the phlegmatic reponse.

"So that little bitch put you up to it? What, did the little whore offer you a bl-"

"Do you remember her friend at the trial?"

"You mean that short bastard who said he had...," Norville's voice vanished into the black hole of his terror.

"He cursed you. I was the curse," Miserke said gravely.

"Can't you turn a curse down?" Norville inquiried numbly.

"No," Miserke said unsympathetically.

"But, I have a job, a family! Couldn't we make a deal?"

"Jobs are irrelevant. Families are irrelevant. Deals are irrelevant. Only revenge matters."

"What about me and my rights?" Norville croaked.

"Rights are irrelevant. You are irrelevant."

"So it was that guy, what was his name?" Norville asked, stalling for time.

"Gerry Glenn."

"Right. Why?"

"He is one of the last of a dying breed. Those who truly care for their friends. But this is neither here nor there. Your two minutes are up. Now you die," commented Miserke without malice, as he pointed a finger at Norville.

"Wait! I demand counter-vengence!" shouted Norville.

"Counter-vengence?" Miserke seemed interested for the first time.

"Yes, I will give you whatever you're getting from him to kill that bastard. What is he giving you?" Norville asked suspiciously.

"I told you. An eye for an eye. A tooth for a tooth. A soul for a soul."

"Jesus," Norville said horrified.

(con't)

TWO MINUTE WARNING, continued

"Jesus is irrelevant," Miserke stated flatly.

"What of my demand? Have we a deal?" Norville almost screamed.

"Demand denied," the wraith stated blandly.

"But you said you never turned anyone down!" Norville wailed.

"Demand denied on the basis that you have no soul to bargain with."

Norville was in unimaginable torment for the few moments it took for each of his atoms to separate from each and every other atom. He disinegrated in a wave of greenish light. His final word hanging in the air like an epitaph: "Revenge!"

Miserke took a step backward into the corner and became one with the darkness and silence and dust.

Mark Darywn

I HAVE NO RELATIVES

I awake in my bright cell.
You are staring.
I cannot escape.
My barriers follow me.

Days are spent in torture labs.
Laughing. Smirking. Ignoring. You
torture me well.
Bronchitis, distraction, sharp tension.
Erect the barbed wire fences.
Tear down the trees,
pollute the air.
Progress the digression.

Feed my good poison.
Blast me, overload
my senses. News. Noise.
Car exhaust. You.

Night is my sanctum.
The cell walls then fade to darkness.
I become a shadow slipping
through the walls. You
become confused, weak and meek.
I flex my muscles. My
thoughts reap the world wind
as I sail the night sea.
Alone and unimpeded
I suffer my yearnings for You.

Maria Mellinger

MY FRIEND GOT ON THE TRENDY BUS

My friend got in the trendy bus,
But I didn't have exact change
And I got left behind. Pouting,
I pursued individuality instead.
Weeks late my friend returned,
Bruised from the bumpy ride
And identical to all the other
Passengers who had paid.

Steev Custer

ETCHED IN STONE

Etched in stone: breathe as
an animal should.
How glorious the dark, and
painful the bright!
We've all seen the treasures
we were not to have seen.

Rejoice, sanity is
always elusive, but the
butterfly net we possess
is therapy, and we
shall reap the rewards
of lepidopterists.

Jason Smith

THE VIOLIN

Entering quickly, the lilted voice
Like the bluebird sings,
Rising and falling

And suddenly forceful
Comes the cardinal's cadence
Diminishing to the slurred
Whistling of the meadowlark.

The voice quickens
As the mockingbird echoes
The lower sounds
Now joined by the repeated cries
of an indigo bunting.

With the ordered confusion of
The hummingbird's wings
Until the quiet, clear
Trills of the sparrow to the end.

And all from one instrument,
One bow across four strings:
Maker of magical birds.

Steev Custer

STEEV'S BOGUS JOURNEY

"No one in the world ever gets what they want and that is beautiful."- They Might Be Giants

I used to have some friends. I used to, but they don't understand. I'm not a complex person, I just want some friends.

When I've had them, they've been great. I can remember skateboarding, running out of gas on a deserted Highway, drinking coffee at all hours of the night. But most importantly, I remember making love to a friend that was truly wonderful. I could have a conversation with her before we made love and after. She was my friend.

Most of my friends have gone now. And I am not asking for sympathy. They have gone because I lied. I lied many times and not because I wanted to hurt them, but because I love them, and would do anything for them to really like me.

I have a few friends. One that writes me from his dorm in Champaign, one who plays the drums and one who kisses me like blades of grass on a May meadow moring.

The rest of my friends have gone, I think. God, how I want some friends. Not a lot, just some who like me for who I am, for what I can do, for my unexplored abilities. God, how I want some friends.

Jennifer Jay

EYES PEELING UPWARD

Eyes peeling upward,
with a twist of my body
I spin the night sky.

Maria Mellinger

NYTOL DJ

A sleeping pill and I threw a party
But we could not invite Dreams-
Her sister Reality is the jealous type,
And no one wants to dance with her.

Jennifer Jay

THIRD WORLD WOMEN WAIT

Third world women wait
at an empty dirt road stretch
to sell their clay masks.

Mark Darwyn

TO THE LIVES THAT THIS CONCERNS

bright light white sight
loud scream, mother's gleam
feeling their plight

planes groan above in blue
ants crawl with you in the grass
swing set swings you so true

teacher lectures, around they sit
ten years later, still going there
thinking now, this life is just shit!

working nine to five, just like a robot
partying on weekends to pass the time
has to be more than that to this life's plot

just when you thought you'd lost, she comes into your life
you pass the days and nights with her, happy as sin
a new family is made to relieve your strife

kids are gone, you and she stay to secure what's left to play
she's gone now: sitting, reading, walking, living isn't much
damn you, too old to live but not ready to pass away

Lauri Stahl

THE VECHICLE IS BROKEN

The vechile is broken
And unable to function.
In fact, it's resting,
on a bed
many wires and tubes connected
to other more important machinery.

The sound of the engine
barely audible
sustained by artificial bellows
blowing in
pumping out
the essentials of maintenance.

Others may come and view the vehicle
but only shortly
there's not much onlookers can do
besides pray
and keep hope
for the body of a boy in I.C.U.

Cliff Druml

PUPPY, PUPPY, RUNNING IN THE STREET

Puppy, pupppy, running in the street,
Sees a piece of garbage Oh'
what a treat.
Puppy, puppy, going to eat,
Puppy, puppy, didn't see the
steam roller now he's dead
meat. (also now there's a whole
new meaning to roll over)
Puppy, puppy who shall you greet,
all the cars and passengers of
the street.
Puppy,puppy, what now?
No time to answer going to
work for my treat.

Maria Mellinger

ZYDECO-SEPARATION

"Why don't you learn to dance instead of looking for new friends? Don't you k now all the friends have been taken" -Bob Dylan TARANTULA

Zydeco comforts me over coffee served in cups he sculpted himself. They are large cups, the kind that filled Alice's hands at the Madhatter's tea party, and the liquid is a slight circle at the bottom. My hands shake with the delicious caffeine and anxiety of it all-two friends deciding they love each other more than me, explaining how things would not change, asking only that I not see either alone. They are now one.

Zydeco listens to my stories. His large hands embrace the woman's face-Zydeco tracing an imperfection in the painted glaze as the man ignores the cracking personality imperfections of his love.

Where I once had two friends, separate and unique, I now had a messy lump of clay. Zydeco takes the clay in his hands and sculpts an apology. They are sorry, he fashions the art. They can not know how thet hurt you.

Or how they hurt themselves.

Steev Custer

A BAG OF LIES

A bag of lies swung by my side today, but lies were not all it contained.

Broken hope, shattered trust and an emotionally tattered tiny boy also occupied thebag.

I have carried this bag for so long, but today I opened it up.

I kept the emotionally tattered tiny boy, and the broken hope and shattered trust melted whrn they met the air.

What's left inthe bag is yours.

Maria Mellinger

ANNALYN HAD HER LIFE IN

Annalyn had her life in
The trunk of my car
For a few weeks
And I could feel her
Moods swing as I steered
Around corners,
Her ideas shift as I
Passed through yellow lights,
Her dreams drained
With the changing of the oil.
She slept in the backseat
And whispered that men
were mere folklore
And women were legs
Out the window of an imported car.
Go play in the traffic,
She'd tell me,
When I asked why.

Steev Custer

WHILE SEARCHING FOR SAGITTARIUS

While searching for Sagittarius, the wrinkly old woman pointed her finger and remembered me. We had never met.

She called me by someone else's name, praised me on their accomplishments, wished me well, then turned as slow as a rickety merry-go-round horse and walked away.

It was then that I discovered and charted the constellation of confusion.

Tom Tolios

AN HONEST MERCHANT

The knight was at an impasse. The man he was protecting, a merchant named Kudan, was being accused of introducing an illegal substance to the citizens of the keep on The Borderlands. They were happy enough to accept his peace offerings initially, but when they found themselves addicted to it, they were forced to get more. And seeing as how Kudan had brought the substance from the east, he was the only supplier of it in the vicinty.

To complicate matters, he knew how to create more. So unless he was killed, he would one way or another get it back into the keep. Oh, it wasn't so bad at first. It made the lowest filth feel better, instilling in them both good emotions and self-esteem. But the stuff shared a like quality with air in that once you started using, you could never stop. To do so would be to die.

Soon those people who had access would get worse. When they wanted it but had not the capital to purchase, they often robbed and killed for funds to sate their needs. Things were getting out of hand. Those who got their fix became more addicted with each use, often stirring the pot of anarchy to whirlpool status. These became obsessive men, craving it always and feeling insecure when it wasn't nearby. As for those that couldn't get what they needed, without fail they would go insane, often breaking into fits of uncontrollable violence and random chaos. This led to many deaths, as one might well imagine.

"So, Tagus Mandoryll. What do you think of me opening shop on the sword coast?" Kudan asked the knight as he turned a roast lapan on a spit.

Tagus looked up from the dirt. They were both sitting in the woods several miles south of the keep. They had camped down for the night, but few words had ben spoken between, as was normal for these two. He studied Kudan's swarthy features, his half eaten beard, his rubber cheeks, and fingers, his spotted yellow teeth. He looked like hell itself, and the stench of his odor was close behind.

"If you get that far," the handsome warrior said, "you'll do well." It came out less offensive than intended.

Kudan smiled. "Thanks, sir knight. Sometimes I wonder why I didn't think about it earlier."

"Perhaps it's because people on the coast are smarter."

"Ha! That must be it. Maybe that's why I'm here with you, so close to the keep." Kudan took a drink from a waterskin, the red stuff inside bubbling out and down his chin as well as into his mouth.

"Maybe." Tagus tried to wax laconic.

"What's the matter, man" Maybe you need to eat something!"

Tagus did not respond.

"Oh! Wait!" Kudan stood up now, fdropping the waterskin in the dirt, its contents emptying into the soil. "I know what it is. You're upset about that again!"

"Yes! That's it. You have all the answers, so I let you figure it out for yourself."

Kudan laughed loud and hearty, hands on his circumvent midsection. "Oh, come on. Business is what it is, after all. You know that."

"Business should be conducted honorably, and with respect towards your customers." Tagus spoke with conviction.

The barrel-man's eyes widened. "Honor is for knights like yourself and for all underachievers. Compromise is king in my trade."

Tagus leaned against a tree that was behind him. "And what, would you say, is it like to live your life not knowing what you're going to do each day?"

Kudan reached down for his waterskin. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that you never deal the same way twice. Your prices change to suit your needs, and your dependability as a retailer isn't worth much as two coppers."

The fat one sat down and began turning his lapan again. "Everything we do is by our own standards, though. Even you, sir knight, choose to live by your restrictive code of honor."

"The pursuit of virtue is the noblest cause of all."

"Hoho! Don't get all chivalrous with me, Tagus! You know I have not the patience for it."

"That is why you are a wanted criminal and I am a champion of justice." Tagus was losing his resolve slowly.

The lapan done, Kudan took it off the spit and sampled the leg. "Ah! Better than last night! You, sir, are a fine hunter with an eye for quality food!"

"Yes," Tagus added, "but no taste in traveling companions."

"Pfaw!" Kudan spit into the fire, the globule sizzling as it met the heat. "You might profit better from a career as a character assasin."

"And what gives you the right to tell me what my business is?"

Kudan grinned and cocked his head to the side. "Because, sir, I deal with all types in my trade, and I know what I am talking about."

"You have never sold your filth to a member of my order! Never!" Tagus sat up as he denied it.

(con't)

AN HONEST MERCHANT, continued

Kudan spoke, mouth full, pieces of chewed lapan hurtling out of his mouth. "That's right. I forgot. I would never put it to any of your kind to have a good time of it once in your life."

"You, sir, are no supplier of light indulgence. You are a parasitic arc, feeding off the guttersnipe and blueblood alike." Tagus was through being insulted by the merchant.

"Better for you to control them than otherwise!" The merchant rose, his massive frame unbalancing him.

"I am given my duty by a higher source than those!" Tagus stood as well, his chain mail tinkling, the symbol of the Grey Hawk on his tunic.

"Order of the Grey Hawk! Pshaw!" Clumsily, the merchant began gesturing and swaying to accentuate his words. "Like that means anything!"

"Do not affront my honor!"

"Don't tell me about your honor! You are following the doctrines of a man dead two hundred years, slain in battle at Azoun's castle in Cormyr."

"Good values, that such as yourself would benefit from following!" Tagus aded.

"And just why is that?"

Tagus calmed himself a bit. "Because if people cared about the consequences of their actions, there would be less evil in this world."

"Ah, yes. But what you call evil, I call an undesirable side effect to my work." Kudan strode over to the wagon with his merchant's equipment, and he pulled out a flask of the drug. "Take this thing, for example."

"I would rather not." Tagus bit back.

"Hahaha! Very good, friend. But seriously, thiss drug is called 'Ichi Sugai' by its creators. Do you know what that means?"

Tagus remained silent.

Kudan rolled the flask between his fingers. "It means 'one food'. They call it that because you crave it more than anything else once you've sampled it."

"Why are you telling me this?"

"Because," Kudan explained as he inched towards the other, "It's something you should know."

Kudan raised it up in the air. "It's a magnificent concoction, really. Creates wonderful job security."

"You bastard!" Tagus sprung on the physically unable merchant, smashing him against the wagon's side. Tagus held him by the shirt. "What you call 'job security' has cost hundreds their lives!"

Feeling the knight's hot breath weakened Kudan's resolve a little. "Everything leads to that, Tagus. Even your bold claim to being a savior has led, more than one time, to the death of others."

Tagus stepped back. "I do not have to justify myself to the likes of you! I know my duty."

"We all know our duty, don't we? Mine is to make money, and yours is to protect me." Tagus looked down in shame as the merchant continued. "Surely, I don't have to remind you that you pledged your sword to my well being in Heliagobulus?"

Tagus nodded, "I remember. You begged me to protect you from the horde of beggars that was bearing down on you. You looked so pitiful, I had no choice. It wasn't until Straplok that I discovered what a worm you were."

"Haha! Yes, but a wealthy one at that, And that is the name of the game, Tagus Mandoryll. Without gold, you cannot succeed anywhere in the realms." Kudan sat down and picked up his lapan once more. "So relax and enjoy your situation. You are with one of the richest men in the land, and his finances are at your disposal."

Tagus went to his bedroll. "Your temptations fall flat on me,man. I do not desire anything that can be gotten with blood money." As he removed his chain hauberk, a thought occured to him. "Tell me something, Kudan. What's going to stop me from killing you when we reach the sword coast?"

The fat merchant smiled. "I'll just have to find someoneelse to protect me, until I leave port for the east. I thought you already knew that."

"Yes," Tagus conceded, "I already thought of that."

No more words were spoken for some time. Tagus curled himself up in his bedroll to sleep, and Kudan fed his face with the remainder of the roast. The night sound haunted Tagus as he pondered on the dilemma. Then, a thought occured to him, small at first, but growing into the focus of his determination.

"Kudan." this was after an uncounted time period.

The merchant looked up from his log of sales. "Yes, what is it?"

"Do you ever take the stuff?"

"Why yes, my boy. It's quite the trip, and I find that it relieves tension, like all good drinks."

"I see." Tagus recorded. "Good night, Kudan."

And then the knight fell asleep, the merchant soon following.

Kudan awoke the next morning to the sound of burning wood. He turned lazily to the source of the noise, thinking it the remains of last night's campfire. If only it were so. His wagon was a pile of ash, now undergoing its last death throes as the wood cracked and split in the inferno that (con't)

AN HONEST MERCHANT, continued

had taken it. The two mules that pulled the wagon were gone, as was Tagus' warhorse. He sat up tp alert the warrior, but he was nowhere to be seen.

He began to call out the knight's name, hoping with fervor that he had merely gone out for breakfast. But this, he feared, was not the case. The letter, tacked to a tree with a knife, was dread assurance that Tagus was aware of the wagon's destruction, and the mules' disappearance.

The letter, quilled in ink, read: "Kudan: The wagon caught on fire last night. One of the embers from the campfire must have leapt onto your cloth chest and started the whole thing. I have gone to secure a new wagon. I have taken the mules with me because there is no good grazing at our campsite. I have left you some of my rations, and what I could salvage out of your own provisions. Sadly, your log and all of your merchandise is lost. I will procure some more of these things for you as well. If I do not return, then I wish you the best of luck. The keep is two days travel by foot, and if the bandits are generous, no harm should befall you. My hope goes with you,

Tagus Mandoryll."

Kudan looked to the pile of things that Tagus had assembled for him. A good amount of food and water. He sighed mentally, and looked down in relief. At the base fo the tree were several empty green flasks, the residue of a green fluid inside them. Kudan slowly fell to his knees and picked up the flasks, holding them as he had so many times before, when he sold them, full, to unsuspecting customers. He himself had taken consistent amounts daily. And now they were all gone, with no means at hand to create more of the stuff. The keep was two days travel by foot, and they wanted to kill him there. It was the only vestige of civilization until The Keep of the Raven, which was home to Lord Garion Soth , the living death knight. He would kill Kudan for no reason at all, save for a minute's curiousity. After that, by horse it was at least a week to Hillsfar. How long by foot, then?

Even if Kudan had managed to survive the animosity towards him at his destination, he would become mad with lust for the drug before this day was out. The end was before him, so he wept. He wrapped his arms as well as he could around the base of the tree, needing the support to stay vertical in his delirium. He spent most of the morning ther, thinking of possible solutions out of this predicament. Soon after that, the madness came, and his thoughts became less coherent. It became hard for him to work things out in his head. He expressed his rage verbally several times, calling Tagus a liar-knight, and a backstabber, but it didn't matter. Tagus would not hear the accusations. The only reply to Kudan's insults was his own voice, echoing throughout the plains around him.

Steev Custer

I CAN SEE

I can see, am not
blind. The
way she dances and all the
magnificent concepts
she lives. Yet, I am very
frightened of her. Dreams
have become reality and she
wants to consume
me and discard me for not
being innocent.
Yet I can see, am not
blind, only deaf,
mute, and lonely in
a Hefty-bag world of
change.

Maria Mellinger

THE RED HEAVYWEIGHT THAT HOLDS HER

With the grace of a cellost raising her bow to the neck of the cello, she carasses her red freckled human neck as if touching the music she longs to play. She gathers her red hair too, like polished wood- -and pulls it into a ponytail, plucking the dead cello strings into submission. With her free hand, the hand that would hold the strings, the hand that would be callused for its lack of a beautiful bow, she grips the scissors and cuts the hair, the strings, the symphony, the red heavy eight that holds her away from her music.

Mark Darwyn

CAMPING

Lumps on my back and bright heat in my tent,
Bladder full and eighty steps toward relief.
I return to find ants on my cooler,
but buttered toast soon renews my belief
that I'm in the right place after all.

Sun blares down on a hot and blatant day.
In the cool woods I'm pleasantly alone,
except for my girl and our rapture shared.
I wish this place could be my lifetime home,
but that would only be a dream.

At night Antares shines like a red coal.
Soon the fire dims the sky but heats our heart.
I move close and tell her how I feel, but
it's a lie since tomorrow we'll once again depart.

Jennifer Jay

RON RICO
1860-?

You came here
with a phony royal seal--
"Puerto Rico Prince"
of rich, strong-willed character.

Hazel eyes,
handsome, with a smooth dry taste
in your liquid mouth.
Skill and dedication in

The making.
Rico has old-fashioned charm,
and blends in smoothly
in every situation.

See him smile
at an Uptown party with
Lady Colada.
She grasps his silk sleeve, looking

Delicious
in her froathy cream boa.
Together they watch
the Mai-Tai performers dance

Half-naked,
whooping banshee howls to the
Rum-a-tum-tum beat
Of a Tahitian Drummer.

You came here,
Ron Rico, with nothing but
determination,
self-pride, and masterful grace.

You gained a
gold label by climbing up
the social ladder.
I know how you schemed. You are

Transparent.
Selfish bastard! You knew that
each rung you stepped on
was actually a life.

Turning them
to alcholics, leaving
a trail of divorce,
lost careers, abused children

Birth defects,
sclerosis of the liver,
auto accidents,
loneliness, worthlessness, and

Destruction.
But to see you applauding
the Mai-Tai dancers,
no trace of sin in your smile,

One could not
believe my accusations.
Like Dorian Gray,
your wickedness is not seen.

On your face.
Rather, your twisted portrait
is the suffering
of men you overpower.